United Nations A/AC.109/2006/14

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 March 2006

Original: English

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

New Caledonia

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	General	1–5	2
II.	Political situation	6–30	3
	A. Background	6	3
	B. Governmental structure	7	3
	C. Recent political developments	8–25	3
	D. External relations	26–30	6
III.	Economic data and developments	31–50	7
	A. General	31–35	7
	B. Labour	36	9
	C. Mineral resources	37–43	9
	D. Tourism	44–47	10
	E. Other economic sectors	48–50	11
IV.	Consideration of the question by the United Nations	51–53	12
	A. Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples	51	12
	B. Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)	52	12
	C. General Assembly	53	12

06-29118 (E) 170406

I. General

1. New Caledonia[1] is located in the Pacific Ocean, about 1,500 kilometres east of Australia and 1,700 kilometres north of New Zealand. It comprises one large island, known as Grande Terre, and smaller islands known as the Loyalty Islands (Ouvéa, Maré, Lifou and Tiga), the Bélap Archipelago, the Isle of Pines and Huon Islands. There are also several uninhabited islands to the north of the Loyalty Islands. The area of Grande Terre is 16,750 square kilometres, and that of the Territory is 19,103 square kilometres. Nouméa, the capital, is located in the south of Grande Terre. The Territory is divided into three provinces, South and North (on Grande Terre) and the Loyalty Islands.

2. In August 2004, a new census completed by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, placed the population of New Caledonia at 230,789, an increase of 33,953, or 14.7 per cent since the last census in 1996.[2] The 2004 census, which focused on regional groupings of the population, as opposed to ethnic groupings, provoked controversy and incited a boycott by the indigenous movement, dissatisfied with the omission of questions regarding ethnicity. The questions had been removed following an intervention by the President of France, who had labelled them scandalous and unlawful.

3. Meanwhile, the Caledonian Congress decided to organize another survey in 2005 to obtain information regarding the ethnic composition of its population.[3] According to the previous census in 1996, the population comprised indigenous Melanesians known as Kanaks (42.5 per cent); persons of European origin, mainly French (37.1 per cent); Wallisians (8.4 per cent); Polynesians (3.8 per cent); and others, mainly Indonesians and Vietnamese (8.2 per cent). Almost half the population was reported to be under 25 years of age.

4. Although there was a measurable increase in the population between 1996 and 2004, as mentioned above, the demographics remained unaltered, with the majority of the population (68 per cent) living in the South Province, mainly around the greater Nouméa area, while 21 per cent lived in the North Province, and only 10.6 per cent in the Loyalty Islands. In 1996, the native Kanak population made up almost 78 per cent of the population of the North Province and 97 per cent of the population of the Islands, but only 25.5 per cent of the population of the South Province. With respect to the Territory's second largest population group, persons of European origin, 89 per cent lived in the South Province. The official language is French and about 28 Melanesian-Polynesian dialects are spoken.

5. The political and administrative structures of New Caledonia have been fundamentally altered by the Nouméa Accord (A/AC.109/2114, annex), signed in May 1998 between the Government of France, the pro-independence Front de libération national kanak socialiste (FLNKS) and the integrationist Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR). Under the terms of the Accord, the New Caledonian parties opted for a negotiated solution and progressive autonomy from France rather than an immediate referendum on political status. The transfer of powers from France began in 2000 and is to end within 15 to 20 years, when the Territory will opt for either full independence or a form of associated statehood. The political and legislative process that is under way and the new institutional arrangements in place in New Caledonia are described in the 2005 report (see A/AC.109/2005/13, paras. 6-10, and 30 and 31). The characteristics of New

Caledonia's economy and employment, as well as current efforts to implement a policy of redressing economic and social imbalances between the more prosperous South Province and the less developed North Province and Loyalty Islands, are described in section III below.

II. Political situation

A. Background

6. As mentioned above in paragraph 5, see the 2005 report for further details (ibid., paras. 6-10).

B. Governmental structure

7. No new developments have been reported since the 2005 report (ibid., paras. 11-16, and 25 and 26).

C. Recent political developments

8. Following the ratification of the Nouméa Accord by the people of the Territory and the codification of its provisions into French law, New Caledonia is no longer considered an Overseas Territory. Instead, the Government of France describes it as a community sui generis, which has institutions designed for it alone to which certain non-revocable powers of State will gradually be transferred.

9. For the past 25 years, the party system in New Caledonia has been dominated by the anti-independence RPCR, which was founded and led until 2005 by long-time President of the South Province, Jacques Lafleur. According to the administering Power, uneasiness about one party dominating the party system grew and culminated just months prior to the Caledonian general elections in May 2004 with the emergence of a new party, Avenir Ensemble (AE).[4] The AE party is opposed to complete independence from France. However, the party is viewed to be more consensus-oriented with the indigenous Kanak movement, and supportive of full implementation of the Nouméa Accord. The indigenous movement is part of FLNKS, a coalition of several pro-independence groups, of which only Union Calédonienne (UC) and Parti de Libération Kanak (PALIKA) are represented in the Territory's Congress.

10. FLNKS has faced problems in defining its internal organization and party strategy and has been without a leader since 2002, owing to splits within the alliance. FLNKS insists that a future vote about New Caledonia's status should be about full independence rather than an endorsement of a continuing relationship with France, as advocated by the anti-independence party RPCR and the leaders of the AE party.[5]

11. The last elections for the three Provincial Assemblies, which also determine the composition of Congress, the legislative body of New Caledonia, were held on 9 May 2004, ending the 25-year domination of the Caledonian Government by RPCR (see para. 9 above). In its first election, AE obtained 16 of the 54 seats in Congress, on par with RPCR. One of the parties normally under the umbrella of

FLNKS, UC, decided to run its own candidates separately in the elections. While FLNKS won nine seats, UC obtained seven. The National Front (FN) received four seats in Congress and two smaller parties obtained one seat each. The anti-independence alliance increased its representation from 31 seats to 36 seats. According to a report of the French National Assembly, that gain was due mainly to fragmentation within the independence alliance. In the South Province, where the independence movement was split into several lists, no representative received the required 5 per cent of the vote necessary for a seat.[6]

12. At the level of the provinces, AE won 19 of the 40 seats in the South Province, while the North Province remained in the hands of FLNKS and UC, with the parties holding 11 and 9 seats respectively from a total of 22. The independence alliance was the strongest performer in the Loyalty Islands, where it holds 6 of 14 seats. In each province, a member of the leading party has been elected President of the Provincial Assembly, who also acts as the chief executive of the province. RPCR also lost the presidency in the South Province, which has been considered its stronghold for the past 25 years when RPCR President Jacques Lafleur served in that post. In January 2005, Mr. Lafleur resigned from his post as President of RPCR and was replaced by Pierre Frogier.[7] In view of the results, a report of the French National Assembly speaks of growing political division between a pro-independence North and an anti-independence South.[8] The next elections for Congress and the Provincial Assemblies are scheduled for 2009.

13. Political stability in New Caledonia can be undermined by the existence of the "collegiality clause" of the Nouméa Accord, which states that if a member of the 11-member Government Cabinet resigns and there is no replacement from his or her party, the whole Government will have to be re-elected by a vote in Congress. As has happened on previous occasions, there is a risk that disgruntled parties might resort to the clause again in order to force a new election.[8]

14. Following the political breakthrough in the May 2004 elections, with the emergence and immediate success of AE, the composition of the New Caledonian Government grew highly complex. In the initial election, on 10 June 2004, Congress fixed the number of Government members at 11 and decided that AE should get 5 seats in the collegial Cabinet, RPCR, 3 seats, FLNKS, 2 seats and UC, 1 seat. The new Government then elected Marie-Noëlle Thémereau of AE President and re-elected the Kanak writer and FLNKS member, Déwé Gorodey, Vice President. Subsequent discord, which led observers to consider the possibility of new congressional elections, ended when RPCR received one more seat at the expense of AE. On 29 June 2004, Mrs. Thémereau and Mrs. Gorodey finally received the required votes to be elected President and Vice-President, respectively, this being the first time the territorial Government has been led by two women.[9]

15. In view of the election results and subsequent events, Mr. Frogier predicted in a speech to the French National Assembly in November 2004 a new period of instability, stating that his party, RPCR, was systematically excluded from all responsibilities by an anomalous coalition.[10] However, his successor, Mrs. Thémereau, stressed in her General Political Statement in August 2004, that the absence of an absolute majority both in Congress and in the Government reflected the nature of the Nouméa Accord, which stipulates that power must not be monolithic, but shared.[11]

16. Regarding French State institutions, in the French Senate elections held in September 2001, incumbent Simon Loueckhote of RPCR was elected New Caledonia's Senator for an additional nine years. Regarding the French presidential elections, Jacques Chirac (Rassemblement pour la République) obtained 80.72 per cent of the New Caledonian vote and Jean-Marie Le Pen 19.58 per cent.[12] In the June 2002 elections for the French National Assembly, New Caledonian voters returned two members of the pro-integrationist RPCR to their seats, namely, Mr. Lafleur, who has held the seat in Paris for 24 years, and Mr. Frogier.[13]

17. The French State is represented in the Territory by High Commissioner Michel Mathieu, who was appointed to the post in September 2005.

18. As envisaged in the Nouméa Accord, in 1999 the new institutions began to enact country laws (*lois du pays*), which have the full force of law and can be contested only before the Constitutional Council. Since 1999, 39 such laws have been adopted, 5 during the period under review. The laws adopted in the past two years relate to social, finance and customs issues and various tax laws.[14]

19. In the past, in spite of the considerable institutional and administrative advances described above, progress was often hindered by friction between RPCR and FLNKS, owing to their differing interpretations of collegiality in Government matters. They held opposing views on issues such as voter eligibility, mining initiatives and, especially, implementation of the Nouméa Accord. President Thémereau and her party have promised to resume implementation of the commitments outlined in the Nouméa Accord, especially those related to social reform, in collaboration with indigenous Kanak leaders. In this regard the Government has raised the minimum wage and has begun to tackle a chronic shortage of low-cost housing. It will also introduce indigenous languages into the school system in 2006 and pursue policies designed to bring more Kanaks into mainstream business and ministerial administration. The Government, however, remains opposed to full independence for the Territory from France, while Kanak leaders mostly favour full independence and are becoming increasingly impatient with the slow implementation of the Nouméa Accord.[5]

20. In January 2006, the Secretary-General of the United Nations received a letter from the National Council for Indigenous Peoples Rights of New Caledonia (Conseil pour le Droits du Peuple Autochtone en Kanaky New Calédonia (CNDPA)), stating its dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Nouméa Accord. According to CNDPA, the indigenous Kanak people have been systematically excluded from the process of power transfer mandated by the Accord and chronically underrepresented in New Caledonia's governmental and social structures. CNDPA has asked the United Nations to look into the matter.

21. In 2004, the French Government expressed its intention to be an impartial and engaged judge during the Nouméa process, and President Chirac stressed the role of the French Government as a partner in the transfer of further jurisdictions to New Caledonia. He pledged that the Nouméa Accord would be fully implemented and respected by the State and that it would help to further the development of education, environment, regional cooperation and metallurgical projects.[4]

22. As mentioned above (see para. 10), divisions within the pro-independence camp have been apparent since the resignation of FLNKS leader Roch Wamytam from the Government in October 2001 and the growing conflict between the various

components of the party, including among those represented in Congress. While PALIKA represents a moderate position with regard to the implementation of the Nouméa Accord, UC has adopted a more radical approach towards independence.[15] The whole implementation process of the Nouméa Accord could be jeopardized by ongoing instability and observers have noted that the dissolution of FLNKS still cannot be ruled out.[8]

23. In January 2005 the Committee of signatories of the Nouméa Accord met in Paris. Prior to the meeting, it was discussed whether AE should be allowed to participate in the follow-up process, which historically was supposed to be between France and the original signatories of the Accord. RPCR was opposed to the idea of including the new party. In the end, a compromise was reached stipulating that each delegation was allowed to include members of other parties, such as AE.[15] According to the summary of the meeting, the following issues were discussed: the composition of the electorate for New Caledonian elections; the introduction of the euro; new development agreements for the period 2006 to 2009; and the implications of the new census regarding financial support for New Caledonia.

24. The issue of voter eligibility is central to the implementation of the Nouméa Accord. In November 2005, the Caledonian Union (UC) confirmed Pascal Naouna as its President, a strong supporter of the fixed electoral body whereby only people born in New Caledonia could vote on the future of the Territory. This was in direct opposition to Rassemblement-RPCR President Pierre Frogiers in October 2005, when he defended the "sliding" electoral body provisions, whereby 10 years of residence in the Territory would be sufficient to vote in the independence referendum scheduled to be held between 2014 and 2019. In the same month, the Libération Kanak Socialiste (LKS) party reaffirmed its opposition to these provisions, even for non-natives who had been resident in New Caledonia for 20 years on the date of the vote.[16] During his visit to Nouméa in 2003, President Chirac promised to resolve the question of voter registration before the end of his term.[15]

25. Another political issue that continues to cause tension in New Caledonia is the inter-ethnic strain between the Kanaks and the settlers from the French territory of Wallis and Futuna, and the confrontations that flared between them in 2001 and 2002 (see A/AC.109/2002/13, paras. 30-32, A/AC.109/2003/7, para. 32, and A/AC.109/2005/13, paras. 37 and 38).

D. External relations

26. The legal framework within which New Caledonia may establish external relations is governed by the Organic Law of 1999. In that regard, the participants at the January 2002 meeting of the signatories of the Nouméa Accord agreed on the importance of developing trade and other relations with the larger actors in the Pacific region (Australia and New Zealand), as well as with other island States, and of building on existing links with regional organizations. Another concern expressed was the need to establish better links with the European Union (EU), given its political, commercial and financial importance.

27. On this multilateral front, New Caledonia has strengthened its ties with the EU, within which it has the status of associated territory. New Caledonia participated in the EU Overseas Countries and Territories Forum held in Papeete, Tahiti, from 29 March to 1 April 2005. The agenda covered regional cooperation

and economic development and the future of the association contracts between the EU and the Overseas Territories. In May 2005, New Caledonia and the French Overseas Territories voted in the referendum held in France on the European Union Constitution, which was rejected by a 55 per cent majority.[17]

28. Another important issue related to the EU is the possible introduction of the euro in New Caledonia by 2007. Currently, the Territory's currency is the Comptoirs Français du Pacifique franc (CFP), which has an exchange rate fixed to the euro. According to President Thémereau, a consensus among the Territory's major political forces is a prerequisite for any decision with regard to the introduction of the euro. The European Union demands it be simultaneously introduced into all three French Pacific Territories following the formally expressed wish of their Governments.[18]

29. In October 2005, at the 36th Summit of the Pacific Islands Forum in Papua New Guinea, leaders endorsed the Pacific Regional Framework for Action for Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, 2005-2015, as well as the report of the Forum Ministerial Committee on New Caledonia. Leaders welcomed the high degree of political will to implement the Nouméa Accord, and praised the continuing role of the Forum Ministerial Committee in monitoring developments in the Territory and encouraging closer regional engagement.[19] New Caledonia has enjoyed observer status at the Forum since 1999.

30. On the bilateral front, New Caledonia received an official visit from New Zealand's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade in March 2005. In accordance with President Chirac's wishes expressed during the France-Oceania summit in July 2003, a new form of cooperation was established among Australia, France and New Zealand in terms of fishing zone surveillance. In response to the invitation issued at that time, President Thémereau made her first official visit to New Zealand in July 2005. The highlight of the meetings held with the Prime Minister of New Zealand and her cabinet were discussions on regional cooperation, the economic situation and trade policy.[20]

III. Economic data and developments

A. General

31. New Caledonia, with its considerable economic assets, ranks among the more affluent Pacific nations. New Caledonians, with an average annual per capita income of $12,800, enjoy one of the highest incomes in the Pacific region.[21] New Caledonia, however, also suffers from long-standing structural imbalances between the economically dominant South Province and the considerably less developed North Province and the Loyalty Islands. Therefore, in the context of the Matignon Accords of 1988 (see A/AC.109/1000, paras. 9-14) and the Nouméa Accord of 1998, much of the efforts of the Government of France and New Caledonian institutions in the past decade have been aimed at *rééquilibrage*; that is, redressing the balance among the three provinces in terms of infrastructure, social services and employment opportunities. Accordingly, 70 per cent of State assistance to the Territory is earmarked for the North Province and the Loyalty Islands, with the remaining 30 per cent for the South Province. In January 2002, following the second meeting of the signatories of the Nouméa Accord, the French Government

announced that its economic assistance to New Caledonia over the coming decade would be invested mainly in the nickel industry, tourism and education.[22] In addition, €19 million has been reserved for investment contracts between the French State and the local government communities (*communes*) in the Territory. In 2005, the State awarded two grants for a total of €7 million to these local government communities. The administering Power reported a slow use of credits, however, owing to difficulties in the application process, financing the balances and putting the projects into effect.[15] At the end of 2003, 19 *communes* had signed contracts with the State, focused on road works, public buildings, new schools, water supplies, sanitation and waste disposal.

32. According to information provided by the administering Power, the French State continued to offer fiscal incentives to encourage investment in its Overseas Territories, as well as specific tax facilities aimed at strengthening New Caledonia's metallurgy and mining sectors, hotel industry, housing, transport sector and public service concessions.

33. New Caledonia will remain heavily dependent on direct financial transfers from France, which are equivalent to around 30 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Approximately 80 per cent of that amount is spent on health, education and the payment of public service salaries, with the remainder funding development schemes, mainly in the North and Island Provinces. In December 2005, the French Government announced an increase in financial assistance to the Territory amounting to €910 million (€4,015 per inhabitant). That amount included €128 million for defence, €16.2 million for justice, and €21.2 million for finance and industry.[15]

34. In August 2005, the territorial Government announced a budgetary surplus of some CFP 10 billion. The 2006 budget of CFP 114 billion which was approved by the territorial Congress in December 2005, reflected the high expectations of a nickel-related boom. The Employers' Federation warned, however, that the worsening industrial-relations climate and the high number of strikes affecting the Territory could have a serious impact on the local economy.[23] In December 2005, New Caledonia's Northern and Southern provinces endorsed a cumulative total of $600 million worth of budgets for 2006. Over $100 million are earmarked for investments with the rest allocated for social housing, with a pledge to build some 1,000 units per year, undertake school renovation, and promoting economic development. On 1 January 2005, the official minimum monthly wage was increased to CFP 110,000 (around $1,200), with further increments contemplated in 2006 and 2007 bringing it to CFP 120,000.[24]

35. Meanwhile, as discussed in paragraph 28 above, New Caledonia's currency, the Pacific franc, could be replaced by the euro within two years if all three French Pacific Territories concur. The Chamber of Commerce has commissioned feasibility studies, and its Chairman has stated that the euro would facilitate trade, promote savings and attract foreign investment. On the other hand, the change is opposed by the pro-independence parties, which assert that, under the provisions of the Nouméa Accord, currency matters are to be dealt with locally, and a switch to the euro would serve only to bind New Caledonia more closely to France.[25]

B. Labour

36. According to information provided by the administering Power, 7,842 persons were unemployed at the end of December 2004, corresponding to an unemployment rate of approximately 9.4 per cent. The same source noted that labour disputes are frequent in New Caledonia, leading to many hours of lost productivity owing to strikes and lockouts. Despite the more conciliatory stance of the AE-led Government towards the Kanak population, industrial disputes and strikes, which are sometimes accompanied by violence, is expected to remain a feature of the economic and political scene.[26]

C. Mineral resources

37. New Caledonia's economy is dominated by the nickel industry. The Territory, which is the third largest nickel producer in the world after the Russian Federation and Canada, is estimated to have at least 25 per cent of the world's nickel reserves[27] and is responsible for 6 per cent of the world's nickel output, employing some 3,500 people in mining firms of varying sizes. Although this highly dynamic sector makes up between 80 and 90 per cent of New Caledonia's exports and generates numerous related economic activities, it is fragile in that it is almost entirely dependent on international demand and nickel prices. For that reason, emphasis continues to be placed on the development of local metallurgical production, which creates more wealth, rather than on mineral exports. Chinese demand for New Caledonian nickel, which remains the highest of all, increased 30 per cent in 2005. Additionally, nickel prices rose by more than 30 per cent for the year.[15]

38. There are currently three major projects related to nickel mining under way in the Territory, namely, those of Société Le Nickel, Falconbridge Limited and the International Nickel Corporation (Inco) (see A/AC.109/2000/4, paras. 30-32; A/AC.109/2001/14, paras. 33-36; and A/AC.109/2002/13, paras. 36 and 37). While it is hoped that these projects will lead to significant economic growth, they remain controversial for environmental and financial reasons. There has been an ongoing debate for some years over the impact that new nickel projects will have on New Caledonia's pristine maritime environment and coral reef system. The reef is 1,600 kilometres long and covers about 8,000 square kilometres. It is regarded by scientists as having great research potential and it is also a major tourist attraction. The Kanaks believe that mining rights are being sold off cheaply, that the economic benefits are not flowing to the poorer areas of the Territory and that development will damage the local environment.[26]

39. The first of the three projects is being developed by Société Le Nickel (SLN) (the New Caledonian affiliate of the French State-owned company Eramet), which is investing between €140 million and €190 million in its Doniambo smelter to boost production from 60,000 tons to 75,000 tons per year. According to the French Government, the renovation, which implies the upgrading of one of Doniambo's three smelters and of another SLN mine at Tiebaghi, is scheduled to begin production in 2006.[8]

40. The second project under way is a joint venture between the Kanak-controlled Société Minière du Sud-Pacifique and the Canadian company Falconbridge Limited, recently acquired by Inco. The project will include the construction of a smelter in

the North Province to process nickel from the Koniambo mountains. It is estimated that this smelter will produce some 60,000 tons per year, creating 800 jobs directly and 2,000 indirectly. It is also at the heart of a major project to bring wealth and employment to the underdeveloped North Province through the construction of an electric power plant, a deep-water port and a hydraulic dam expected to raise New Caledonia's long-term growth rate to 6.5 per cent.[28] Production is not due to begin until the period 2008-2009, but the North Province government began construction of residential and commercial buildings in 2004 around the Koniambo site in order to prepare for the population increase that will occur when the mine opens.[8]

41. The third project by the Canadian company, Inco, for a new nickel mining and smelting project at Goro, South Province, resumed in early 2005, following long delays. However, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, demonstrations, environmental concerns and industrial disputes could hinder the project's progress. The arrest in February 2005 of two Kanak leaders over a blockade of the Goro Nickel mine construction site has raised concern about whether smooth implementation of the project can be achieved. The President of the Rhebun Nuu, a group dealing with indigenous concerns, opposes the mine on environmental grounds, particularly the discharge of waste into the ocean. One clan leader, Hilarion Vendegou, claimed that opposition to the mine was harmful to his people's long-term economic interests.[26]

42. The three provinces have each signed up to acquire a total share of 10 per cent in Goro Nickel. The share was originally held by the French Government's mining and geological research department. Notwithstanding further delays, the mine is due to open in 2007 and is expected to eventually produce 60,000 tons of nickel and 5,000 tons of cobalt per year.[29]

43. New Caledonia hosted the International Nickel Symposium in July 2005, in which discussion panels focused on environmental and social issues and international delegations visited the SLN, Falconbridge and Inco projects. A central question was to what extent Kanak people would gain meaningful employment from projects that would define the economic reality of the Territory for decades to come. In the case of the Inco and Falconbridge projects, delegates stressed that it was the responsibility of unions in Canada and New Caledonia to work together, along with environmental organizations and other concerned citizens, to ensure that enforceable regulations were in place.

D. Tourism

44. In 2003, the New Caledonia Government decided that Japanese nationals, who have been the mainstay of the tourism industry, could visit New Caledonia for 90 days without a visa. In addition, according to the administering Power, the French Foreign Minister proposed that China initiate negotiations on an agreement that would also accord New Caledonia and French Polynesia the status of "approved tourist destination" for Chinese visitors.[4] However, political instability and continuous labour strikes have remained the two main problems for the Territory's tourism sector. The Territory has suffered from competition with other attractive Pacific Islands such as Hawaii or Guam.[23]

45. According to information provided by the administering Power, tourist arrivals dropped just over 20 per cent since the beginning of 2005, due to a decline in

French, Japanese and other tourists groups. In the meantime, New Caledonia experienced an almost 40 per cent and 45 per cent increase in Australian and New Zealand tourists, respectively.[15]

46. A strategic plan to revive the tourism industry, commissioned by the Government and published in December 2005, aims to triple the number of tourists to 180,000 during the decade 2005-2015. The plan consists of three phases to be implemented successively in 2006, 2008 and 2012, and will seek to diversify those tourist destinations that are away from the capital. The first phase will involve a new marketing strategy and will finance rental accommodation designed to attract an upscale clientele. The second phase will increase hotel accommodations by 1,200 rooms, with a view to launching a new tourist image. The final phase will be one of consolidating New Caledonia's position in the international tourism market.[30]

47. An international cruise company, P&O Cruises, has decided to make New Caledonia its main port of call in an expanded cruise programme from Australia. As a result, the number of visits by P&O Cruises ships operating from Australia increased by just over 50 per cent in 2005, while anticipated visits to the Loyalty Islands is expected to increase by 30 per cent in 2006. All three liners on the route have docked at a new port, Ouvéa, since 2005. New Caledonia is now the most frequently visited destination by P&O Cruises in the region, with the Territory receiving almost half of all port visits made by the company's three Australia-based liners. A third Loyalty Islands port, Maré, will be added to the company's growing portfolio of New Caledonian destinations in the near future. Other ports of call are Nouméa, Emerald Bay and the Isle of Pines.[26]

E. Other economic sectors

48. Other sectors that contribute to New Caledonia's GDP are public administration, commerce, services, construction and public works, small- and medium-scale industry, agriculture and tourism.

49. The agriculture and fishery sectors account for only 2 per cent of GDP, yet they increasingly occupy a central place in New Caledonian society, employing some 30 per cent of the population and making it possible to contain the rural exodus. Rural development projects are aimed at increasing the local market, thereby decreasing the need for imported food. Diversification in the agricultural sector and the development of the aquaculture and fishing industries will continue to expand in 2006 and 2007. Fisheries are underdeveloped, with commercial fishing accounting for only a third of the total catch, most of it tuna exported to Japan. While the North Province and Loyalty Islands authorities have continued the expansion of their fishing fleets, there were mounting concerns about falling stocks of certain species of tuna in the region attributable to overfishing, climate change and ocean temperature cycles. In addition, heavy dependence on imported oil is prompting renewed regional interest in alternative fuel sources, such as ethanol from local sugar.[5]

50. The aquaculture industry, which mainly farms shrimp for export, has been ruffled by a dispute between the two largest producers, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), subsidized by the French Government, and the privately owned Blue Lagoon. SOPAC has objected to a decision by the territorial Government to grant Blue Lagoon the same tax breaks it has benefited from for

20 years on the grounds that the market is too small for two producers. SOPAC claims it could be driven out of business by Blue Lagoon, which has won a five-year contract to supply one of France's largest supermarket chains. The industry has been warned by a French research institute that the shrimp stock, originally imported from South America, needs fresh genetic input from a species to be imported from Hawaii if breeding rates are to be maintained.[31]

IV. Consideration of the question by the United Nations

A. Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

51. At its 9th meeting, held on 16 June 2005 (see A/AC.109/2005/SR.9), the Special Committee on decolonization adopted a draft resolution, submitted by Fiji and Papua New Guinea, in which all parties involved in the status question of New Caledonia were urged to continue promoting a framework for the peaceful progress of that Territory towards an act of self-determination (see A/AC.109/2005/L.9). Such a framework would safeguard the rights of all New Caledonians, especially the indigenous Kanak people.

B. Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

52. At its 5th meeting on 10 October 2005, the Fourth Committee concluded its consideration of issues related to decolonization, and approved by consensus a draft resolution on the question of New Caledonia. Addressing the meeting, the representative of FLNKS, Mr. Roch Wamytan, said that independence was his country's non-negotiable aim and that FLNKS had signed the Nouméa Accord with a view to ending colonial rule, in line with the stated policy of the United Nations. The Accord was an international agreement within international law, intended to involve the Kanaks in all aspects of the transitional process in order to prepare for the future State. Mr. Wamytan also claimed that the administering Power continued to fund European settlement, while major metallurgical projects and tax breaks stimulated immigration to the South Province, which could ultimately lead to the possible partition of New Caledonia. Mr. Wamytan also denounced the exploitation of natural resources, which in his view was disrupting the spirit of the Nouméa Accord. He also said that the vote on the issue of eligibility to vote in a future referendum on self-determination, which had been postponed to 2006, was now likely to be postponed indefinitely, owing to the upcoming French Presidential elections in 2007 (see A/C.4/60/SR.5). As mentioned in paragraph 24 above, President Chirac promised to resolve the question of voter registration before the end of his term.

C. General Assembly

53. At its 62nd plenary meeting, on 8 December 2005, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 60/115 on the question of New Caledonia.

Notes

[1] The information contained in the present report has been derived from information transmitted to the Secretariat by the Government of France on 22 January 2003 and from published sources.

[2] Institut de la Statistique et des Études Économiques 2004 — Nouvelle Calédonie.

[3] Pacific Islands Report, 1-20 September and 10 December 2004.

[4] Administering Power, "L'évolution de la Nouvelle Calédonie en 2004".

[5] Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report, December 2005.

[6] Assemblée Nationale, report No. 1868, 13 October 2004.

[7] Pacific Islands Report, 23 June 2004.

[8] Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report New Caledonia, December 2003.

[9] Pacific Islands Report, 13 July 2004.

[10] Pierre Frogier, speech delivered to the French National Assembly, 9 November 2004.

[11] Marie-Noëlle Thémereau, "Déclaration de Politique Générale", 17 August 2004.

[12] Agence France-Presse, 22 April 2002; *Le Monde*, 23 April 2002.

[13] Oceania Flash, 17 June 2002.

[14] Rapport Annuel de la France aux Nations Unies: La Nouvelle Calédonie, December 2005.

[15] Pacific Islands Report, 12 January 2005.

[16] *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 5 July 2005.

[17] BBC News, 31 May 2005.

[18] Marie-Noëlle Thémereau, "Declaration de Politique Générale", 17 August 2004; Conclusions of the Committee of signatories of the Nouméa Accord, 20 January 2005.

[19] Forum communiqué, 36th Pacific Islands Forum (PIFS (05) 12).

[20] Ambassade de France en Nouvelle Zélande, March/July 2005 (see www.ambafrance-nz.org).

[21] *L'Humanité*, 3 January 2003; Virtual Information Center, 30 January 2004 (see www.vic-info.org).

[22] Agence France-Presse, 22 January 2002; Economist Intelligence Unit, 21 March 2002.

[23] *Pacific Magazine*, 28 December 2005.

[24] *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 19 July 2005 (www.info.lnc.nc/caledonie); Radio New Zealand International, 23 December 2005 (www.rnzi.com).

[25] Oceania Flash, 23 October 2002; Economist Intelligence Unit, *ViewsWire*, 18 December 2002; Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report New Caledonia, March 2005.

[26] Economist Intelligence Unit, March 2005.

[27] Ibid., December 2002.

[28] Ibid., March 2006.

[29] Inco Limited, 18 February 2005 (www.inco.com).

[30] *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 16 December 2005.

[31] Economist Intelligence Unit, March 2003.